

Date: October 25, 2016
To: University Area Commission, University Area Review Board
CC: Kevin Wheeler, Mark Dravillas, Dan Ferdelman
From: Christopher Lohr, Columbus Planning Division
Re: Draft University District Zoning Overlay – Planning Division Response to Feedback Received

The following restates the feedback received during the comment period held from July 25 to August 25, 2016, and provides the Planning Division’s response to said feedback. The responses are, in turn, reflected within the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code document. The responses are divided into the five (5) topic areas:

1. Design Guidelines
2. Parking
3. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
4. Height
5. Potential Expansion of the University Area Review Board (UARB)

0 – 20	Very Low Support
20-40	Low Support
40-50	Balanced Support (-)
50-60	Balanced Support (+)
60-80	High Support
80-100	Very High Support

Design Guidelines

A high degree of support was expressed for the design guidelines overall, with very high support from those respondents that attended the open house. A common refrain was that the guidelines should be strictly adhered to by the University Area Review Board rather than seen as policy guidance.

Online respondents	59% support	Balanced Support (+)
Open House respondents	86% support	Very High Support
Overall	65% support	High Support

Planning Response: The design guidelines, as written in the University District Plan (2015), are incorporated into the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code through a section that specifically references the adopted plan. Other development standards, such as those currently in the Urban Commercial Overlay, are incorporated directly into the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code.

Parking

The parking recommendation received balanced support skewing slightly negative, with low support for the proposal in particular among respondents that attended the open house. Although this code update is specifically for those areas of the University District that are commercial, many of the comments referenced more general problems with parking that pertain to the residential areas of the district. The only comment regarding the proposed commercial parking reduction was that it should be lower for



restaurants. The majority of the comments focused on the residential requirements, i.e. 0.5 spaces per bed. These concerns were either that this ratio was too low or that a “per bed” model was not enforceable and that a model based on either square footage or FAR would be preferable.

Online respondents	46% support	Balanced Support (-)
Open House respondents	29% support	Low Support
Overall	40% support	Balanced Support (-)

Planning Response: Staff recognizes that parking in the University District is of particular concern to residents. The ratio of 0.5 spaces per bed represents, based on stakeholder discussions and staff research, a number that would best represent demand in the commercially zoned areas (e.g. the NMX and RMX subdistricts). This ratio promotes a mix of units with fewer bedrooms while at the same time increasing the required amount of parking for the types of apartment housing that have been built in recent years, often with four (4) or more bedrooms. Left unchanged the existing code would continue to incentivize the construction of these types of high bedroom count units.

The proposed code makes one (1) and two (2) bedroom units, which are more flexible in terms of tenancy, more attractive to developers, while making high bedroom count units less attractive. Regarding the enforceability of the “per bed” model that has been raised; the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code requires the inclusion of bedroom count with plan submissions to ensure compliance with said model.

Unit Type	Current Code		Proposed Code		Proposed Code Result
Studio / 1 BR	1.5 spaces	1.5/bed	0.5 spaces	0.5/bed	Encouraged
2 BR	1.5 spaces	0.75/bed	1 space	0.5/bed	Encouraged
3 BR	1.5 spaces	0.5/bed	1.5 spaces	0.5/bed	Neutral
4 BR	1.5 spaces	0.375/bed	2 spaces	0.5/bed	Discouraged
5 BR	1.5 spaces	0.3/bed	2.5 spaces	0.5/bed	Discouraged
6 BR	1.5 spaces	0.25/bed	3 spaces	0.5/bed	Discouraged

Floor Area Ratio

The floor area ratio (FAR) recommendations received high support overall, with very high support from those that attended the open house. Some respondents thought that there should be a bonus for preservation of green or open spaces, or a reduced bonus so that the maximum became 1.2 instead of 1.4.

Online respondents	63% support	High Support
Open House respondents	80% support	Very High Support
Overall	68% support	High Support

Planning Response: No changes. The FAR recommendations received a high level of support and have been incorporated into the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code.

Height

The height recommendations received high support overall, with very high support from respondents at the open house and a slightly positive balanced feedback from online respondents. Most responses were in regards to the NMX subdistrict where staff recommended a 45 ft. height limit. Some respondents felt that this was too low while other thought that the prevailing 35 ft. height district was

more appropriate in these areas. Most comments also expressed support for the removal of the step-back, step-up provision of the existing code as recommended by staff.

Online respondents	53% support	Balanced Feedback (+)
Open House respondents	89% support	Very High Support
Overall	62% support	High Support

Planning Response: No changes. The height increase to 45 ft. in the NMX subdistrict provides an increased height for property owners at the street while eliminating the opportunity to develop significantly higher developments that front rear alleys adjacent to lower intensity residential. Staff modeling of 45 ft. height limits, when combined with the FAR and parking standards, produces appropriately scaled buildings for the NMX subdistrict and has been incorporated into the Draft University District Zoning Overlay code.

Potential Expansion of University Area Review Board

Staff requested feedback on whether the UARB should be expanded to include all areas proposed for the NMX and RMX subdistricts. This question was met with high support overall for expanding the UARB, with slightly positive balanced feedback received from open house respondents. The most common concern for those supporting expansion was that it be coupled with changes to the composition of the UARB membership so that, in their opinion, it better represented the community. Property owners were also concerned with the elevated level of review, especially considering the fact that adjacent residential areas are not currently being considered for expansion as part of Phase I.

Online respondents	77% support	High Support
Open House respondents	60% support	Balanced Feedback (+)
Overall	71% support	High Support

Planning Response: Staff will not expand the UARB as part of Phase 1. Though overall support for UARB expansion was high, the Phase 2 residential component of the code update will also ask this question. At that point the details of a potential expansion will be explored. Note that the draft code does change the name of UARB. It is now referred to as the University Impact District Review Board, consistent with its area of jurisdiction.